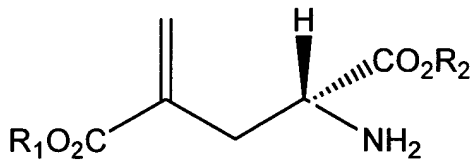
Amendments to and Listing of the Claims:

Please amend claims 1 and 6 as set forth in the following Claims Listing:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for synthesizing greater than 99% enantiomerically pure 4-methylene-L-glutamic acid ~~and esters~~ or an ester thereof having the formula



wherein R_1 and R_2 are individually hydrogen or C_1-C_6 alkyl, said process comprising the steps of:

   a. providing a protected (2S)-pyroglutamic acid or ester thereof as a starting material;
   b. reacting the starting material with an amide or an acetal at a temperature ranging from 70° C to 130° C to form a protected 4-enamine pyroglutamic acid intermediate or ester thereof;
   c. hydrolyzing the protected 4-enamine derivative to form a protected 4-hydroxymethylidene pyroglutamic acid intermediate or ester thereof;
   d. reducing in a basic solution the protected [[4-]]~~hydroxymethylidned 4-~~ hydroxymethylidene intermediate to form a protected 4-methylene pyroglutamic acid or an ester thereof; and
   e. reacting the protected 4-methylene pyroglutamic acid with a ~~strong~~ base to form linear 4-methylene glutamic acid, or an ester or salt thereof.

2. (Canceled)
3. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 2 wherein step b includes reacting the starting material with an acetal at a temperature ranging from 105° C to 115° C.

4. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein step c includes reacting the protected 4-enamine intermediate with a strong acid.
5. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein step d includes reacting the protected 4-hydroxymethylidene intermediate with a carbonate salt.
6. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 1 wherein the ~~strong~~ base is lithium hydroxide.
7. (Canceled)